

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PM-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 EB-11 ACDA-19 SAJ-01 AF-10 MMS-03

DRC-01 /162 W

----- 015544

R 131130Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 526

INFO CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 0429

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CE, MARR, IO

SUBJ: CEYLONSE REACTION TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF DIEGO GARCIA
EXPANSION PLANS

REF STATE 27982

1. ALL ENGLISH AND VERNACULAR NEWSPAPERS FEB 13 AND SRI LANKA BROADCASTING CORP. FOR PAST 24 HOURS CARRIED REPORTS ON PM BANDARANAIKE'S "PERSONAL" MESSAGES TO PRESIDENT NIXON AND PM HEATH. REPORTS SAY PM EXPRESSED SRI LANKA'S "REGRET" AT DECISION TO EXPAND DIEGO GARCIA FACILITIES.

2. THESE ARE FIRST PUBLISHED REPORTS OF ANY CEYLONSE REACTION TO DIEGO GARCIA PLANS. PRESS HAS BEEN CARRYING STORIES ON ADVERSE REACTION TO US/UK PLANS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY INDIA, TANZANIA, AND MALAYSIA. ONLY EDITORIAL APPEARED IN TAMIL NEWSPAPER DINAPATHY OF SUN GROUP FEB 11. WHILE NOTING COUNTRIES OF INDIAN OCEAN VEHEMENTLY OPPOSE BASE IN DIEGO GARCIA EDITORIAL ALSO SAYS REASON FOR BASE IS INCREASING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN AND ADDS SOVIETS TOO MUST PULL OUT.

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3. TODAY'S STORIES MAINLY REPRODUCED TEXT OF SHORT, FIVE-PARAGRAPH COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MDFA). COMMUNIQUE STATED: (A) PM HAD ADDRESSED PERSONAL MESSAGES OF PROTEST TO PRESIDENT NIXON AND PM HEATH ON FEB 8 REGARDING PLANS TO EXPAND DIEGO GARCIA; (B) PM EXPRESSED REGRET AT DECISION IN CONTEXT OF PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH INDIAN OCEAN PEACE ZONE (IOPZ) AND DECISION IS RETROGRADE STEP IN CURRENT EFFORTS TO IMPLMENT IOPZ PROPOSAL; (C) HER MESSAGE REFERS TOWIDE SUPPORT FOR IOPZ PROPOSAL; (D) PM EXPRESSED FEAR THIS WOULD LEAD TO GENERAL ESCALATION IN THIS REGION WITH HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES TO REGIONAL STATES AS WELL AS TO WORLD PEACE; AND (E) PM HAS APPEALED TO PRESIDENT AND HEATH TO RECONSIDER DECISION. TEXT OF HER LETTER HAS NOT BEEN PUBLISHED.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES GSL HANDLING OF ISSUE HAS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED CEYLONESSE WILLINGNESS TAKE US SENSITIVITIES INTO ACCOUNT. LOW-KEY APPROACH IS PROBABLY ABSOLUTE MINIMUM ACTION GSL FEELS IT COULD TAKE AND STILL RETAIN CREDIBILITY AS PROPOSER OF IOPZ. LETTER IS DESCRIBED AS "PERSONAL", INDICATING THAT FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST, PM DOES NOT WISH TO MAKE MATTER ONE OF OFFICIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GSL AND USG.
VAN HOLLEN

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Message Attributes

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30 JUN 2005

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